

# THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

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Rev. Lori Fleming

## MEDITATION

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** I invite you to closer your outer eyes. To take in a deep, cleansing breath and release it slowly. To make yourself comfortable in your chair. If there's anything heavy or on your mind that you've brought into this room, gently let it go. Give it up to God. God's got this! Then take another mindful breath as we begin to move our awareness within: into that quiet, still place at the very center of our being. That place of oneness with Spirit. That place of oneness with each other. That fertile ground of being, where divine ideas are planted and grow, and bring forth spiritual fruit to spiritualize our lives, bringing us closer to the God of our understanding.

In this quiet, still place, we open our hearts and minds to new ideas. To creative ideas. To ideas that bring us into the kingdom of heaven. Into that place of endless possibility for ourselves, for those we love, for community and for the world. We know that God is in each and every person that we meet, and we easily see that divinity shining from their eyes. Recognizing that we are kindred spirits. That each of us was created in the image and likeness of God. A spiritual image created in goodness and in unconditional love.

And so we take just a few moments as we move more deeply into the silence, as we feel the presence of God within.

## SILENCE

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for these moments together. For being uplifted out of the old and into a new consciousness. Of a greater awareness and understanding. Of your divinity within us. We say thank you for each and every blessing. For the blessing that each person brings into this room. For their consciousness, for their love. For all that we are and all that we can be we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** So Sunday morning a man goes in to get his wife up. He shakes her gently and says, "Honey, it's time to get up!" She says, "No! No! I'm not getting up!" She rolls over. He goes back; he waits five minutes and comes back. "Honey! Honey! It's time to get up!" She goes, "No! No! I'm not getting up!" He goes, "You have to get up; it's Sunday!" "No, I'm not getting up!" So he goes out to the kitchen; he gets a cup of coffee. He brings it in. He says, "Honey! It's time to get up!" She goes, "No! No! I'm not getting up!" He goes, "Honey, you have to get up. It's Sunday, and you're the minister."  
[Congregation laughs]

So we're going to do some Bible tonight. I see you shaking like this: "No! Not Bible! Anything but Bible!" When I was a teenager, I decided I was going to read the Bible from cover to cover. And I read Genesis. Did you know in Genesis there are two stories about Creation? In the first story, God creates Adam and decides he needs a helpmate, and he creates Eve. In the second story, God creates Adam out of the dirt, and he creates Eve out of one of Adam's ribs. Now, which is it? No one would ever tell me, because no one knew!

So I went and I read all those "thees" and "thous" in the King James version, and all those "begets." None of those were relatives; I don't know about you. But, you know, if everybody in the world took their Bible off the shelf at the same time, there'd be the biggest dust storm this world has ever seen.  
[Congregation laughs] Yeah, we're thinking about getting rid of books in our house, and my husband says, "Do you really need all those Bibles?" [Congregation laughs] Probably not! [Rev. Lori laughs]

So Unity looks at the Bible as a series of stories of humanity's unfolding consciousness, starting with the Old Testament and moving into the New Testament. And every single character in the Bible represents some aspect of our own personality. We interpret metaphysically, looking beyond the physical meaning to a deeper, more spiritual meaning.

For an example, most of you know the story of the Prodigal Son, right? Well, sometimes I'm the son who gets his inheritance and goes out and squanders it, and then comes crawling back to the Father. Sometimes I'm the resentful son who stays home and says, "Look at me; I'm doing my job." Sometimes I'm the Father, representing God, who welcomes his wayward son home without having to forgive him, and throws him a big party! And sometimes I'm the pigs. [Congregation laughs]

So there's an aspect of each of us in every single Bible character. Tonight we're going to do a metaphysical Bible interpretation, and I'm asking you to willingly suspend your disbelief. Now, you may have been told in the past that the Bible is the ultimate word of God. People ask me that all the time. And you know what I tell them? "Some of it!" [Congregation laughs] Because it was written down by humans. So there's been interpretation.

So we're going to look at the Bible with a whole new set of fresh eyes. We're going to look at a parable – or story – from the New Testament. These parables are attributed to Jesus, and you'll find that they're similar in Matthew, Mark and Luke with just some slight variations. There are 30 parables in the New Testament, and they're organized in a sequence like stepping stones ... like one leads you to a new set of consciousness as each one is told. It's like a hidden pathway. And each of those levels takes us to deeper levels and higher states of consciousness. I could use some more of that!

When we read the parables, we can clearly see that, by the time we get to the Parable of the Sower that I'm going to talk about tonight, something seems to be wrong. People just aren't getting what Jesus is trying to teach them! You may have heard that familiar term: "Those who have ears to hear ..." Those who have ears to hear, they'll understand it.

Well, the Parable of the Sower is the fourth parable, and it's Jesus' response to this problem of people not understanding what he's trying to teach. It's called the key that unlocks the door to the deeper understanding of the parables that follow.

All of the Gospels were written in Greek – Koine Greek, it's called – and it was a common language that was used for trade by the Roman Empire, by Greece, and by everyone in the ancient Near East. Any trading they did, they used this common Greek. And that's what most of the Gospels were written in so it would be a language that people could understand.

In the parables, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven. And in Koine Greek, the word "kingdom" means realm. The word "heaven" means a process of raising up to higher levels of consciousness. So when Jesus refers to the kingdom of heaven, what he actually means is a higher realm of awareness within us of our true relationship with God. A way to live "heaven on earth." Wouldn't that be great if it were heaven on earth all the time for all of us?

So here's how it goes: the Parable of the Sower. This version is found in Matthew, Chapter 13, and it's Verses 1-9. It's also in Mark and Luke:

*"That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea."*

Doesn't that sound great? Sitting beside the sea ... [Congregation laughs] Hearing the waves lapping; the seagulls. Palm trees. Wait ... I'm getting carried away here! Okay!

*"Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told the many things in parables, saying, 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.'"*

Well, that seems easy enough for me to understand! How about you? Don't throw your seeds on the path; the birds will eat them! Jesus told stories that had to do with agriculture, because they lived in an agrarian culture. So he uses themes of planting and growing, and things like vines and vineyards, because it was something people could understand. Most of the people had a little garden in their backyard: a little kitchen garden. And they grew whatever vegetables they would need every day. Now, they'd have to go to the well to get the water, and drag the water back ... so it wasn't easy. I don't know about you, but I have a vegetable garden; I have peppers and tomatoes and green beans and jalapenos and eggplant, but I have an irrigation system. I'm not going to the well for water!

But they wouldn't eat if they didn't have these gardens, so they could understand his agrarian motifs. The planting would be done by hand. Now, if it were a big farm, they might have an ox or a donkey, and they might have some sort of rudimentary plow. But these people with these backyard kitchen gardens would use a stick. And they'd dig up the dirt, and they'd throw the seeds in. And they'd water it, and they'd hope it would come up.

Obviously – this seems simple to us – but the people just weren't getting what Jesus had to say. So let's look at this metaphysically. So it starts out:

*"The same day Jesus went out of the house and he sat beside the sea."*

Mr. Fillmore, in *Revealing Word*, says the sea signifies Universal Mind, or Divine Mind: that great realm of unexpressed and unformed thoughts and ideas that contain all potentiality. It's this universal field of divine ideas where everything that's ever been created and ever will be created is.

Well, we know that original life developed in water and came out of the water. Right? It started with one cell plants like amoebas and paramecium and protozoan ... Am I impressing you with my biology? *[Congregation laughs]* That's all I remember!

So Jesus was probably teaching near the Sea of Galilee, because that was near where he lived. Mr. Fillmore says that the Galileans represent active life thoughts. They're illumined by the activity of consciousness when they have received the truth. So the Sea of Galilee metaphysically means thoughts in Divine Mind containing all this potentiality – represented by the sea – that have been illuminated by spiritual understanding. What better place to teach? I'm going to start calling this the Sea of Galilee, so we're all illumined. *[Continues reading parable]* So:

*"Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there while the whole crowd stood on the beach."*

Now that's kind of curious! But if you want to know why, you read Matthew 12, which is the parable before, starting at Chapter 12, Verse 10. It says that a man with a withered hand came to Jesus, and he said, *"Stretch out your hand,"* and it was healed. It says that a demonic who was blind and mute, Jesus cured him. There's a whole bunch of people that were healed before this parable happens. And so the crowds were following him so that he would cure them. So they were crowding him on the beach such to the point that he had to get in a boat and get away from them. It was like a mosh pit at a concert. *[Congregation laughs]*

So the Pharisees – which is one of the sects of the Jewish priests – rebuked him. They were the ones that went by the letter of the law. Jesus didn't go by the letter of the law; he went by the spirit of the law. So he's out in the boat, and he's been attracting these crowds everywhere he went, because the people wanted to be healed. And they wanted to hear what he had to say, because all their neighbors who had heard him were talking about it. It was a big deal.

So there was this crush of people on the shore who wanted healing, and he had to get away and get in the boat. Now, this would be good, though. Because he's out in the water, and the bank of the Sea of

Galilee would go up like this [*points upward*] and it would make like a natural amphitheater. So the sound would travel up so the people in the back could actually hear him. So the verse goes on:

*“And he told the many things in parables, saying, ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow.’”*

Now that’s not an S-E-W-E-R with the needle; we’re talking about a farmer planting seeds.

*“And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.”*

Metaphysically, a parable is a brief, symbolical story told to illustrate Truth, as opposed to like a fable, that has a moral or ethical ending. So it’s a story to illustrate Truth (with a capital T). Mr. Fillmore says that sowing – that every thought is a seed, and it brings forth after its own kind.

You learned this in third grade when you put a little bean seed in a Styrofoam cup, and you watered it, and it grew a bean plant. It didn’t grow a tomato or a banana plant, right? It grew a bean plant. Because whatever’s in that seed is what it grows. That’s how ideas are! Whatever’s in that idea is what it grows! So be careful, because every negative thought produces a negative result. And every spiritual thought is a seed for spiritual growth.

If you don’t hear anything else I said tonight, remember that. **Every negative thought brings forth negative outcomes, and every spiritual thought is a seed that grows in Spirit.**

So spiritual thoughts feed and nourish and build up our spirituality in us. And the result is a life of vitality in body and mind and spirit. Wouldn’t it be great if we all had that? So what are we sowing in our lives? Negative thoughts or positive thoughts?

Now, I know I’m preaching to the choir, and most of you are thinking positive thoughts all the time. But what about those people who are only thinking of material things? You know, a bigger house, a more expensive car. You know, making more money when they already have plenty ... What kind of seeds are they sowing in their consciousness?

Metaphysically the sower represents a teacher sowing ideas and information into our consciousness. So we have to be careful what seed ideas we allow to come into our consciousness, because they’re going to grow.

So the seed ideas fall on the path. Now, the soil on the path ... It’s like if you go hiking, you know, and lots of people have been walking on the path, and it’s really hard. And it’s solid. And it represents a closed mind: one that’s not receptive to divine ideas.

Now, I know some people with a closed mind. Not in this room, of course! And if you give them a really good idea to make their life better, most of them most of the time just want to keep their minds closed. They don’t want to hear a good idea. But when we squander our resources, the birds come and gobble up the seeds of our own labor.

How many of you have grass in your lawns? The first house we lived in here in Arizona had a gigantic lawn. And we moved in in March and, in the fall, the grass died. And we’re like, *“What’s up with that?!?”* And they told us, *“Well, you have to plant grass twice a year here.”* And so they planted the grass in the fall, and they scattered the seeds all over the place. And here come the birds! And the birds are eating all the seeds! I’m chasing the birds away! And finally I thought, *“Forget it; there’s going to be enough.”* [*Congregation laughs*] There’s got to be enough! [*Rev. Lori laughs*] You put down that seed, and the birds think it’s for them! [*Rev. Lori laughs*]

So the birds who come and eat the seeds represent those people who won’t support your dreams and ideas. The ones who tell you, *“You can’t do that!”* Or the ones who tell you, *“That’s impossible!”* Remember the White Queen in *Alice In Wonderland* who said she could believe six impossible things before breakfast? That’s how I want to be! Six impossible things before breakfast! Because if God gives

me a divine idea that seems impossible before breakfast, I'm going to do my best to create it by dinner time! And I'll invite you all to come over and share it with me!

Don't share your dreams with anyone who won't support them wholeheartedly; they'll just bring you down. You can tell 'em later, when you've achieved it. Fortunately, even when we squander our resources, the sower – that divine teacher in us – is active everywhere. We always get another chance to wake up and be conscious again. Because God is always there with grace, pushing us two steps forward when we took one step back.

So the text continues:

*“Other seeds found on the rocky ground where they didn't have much soil. They sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.”*

We have lots of rocks in Arizona, right? I don't know if you remember in 1978, when Mt. St. Helen's in Oregon exploded? It didn't erupt like a normal volcano; it blew out the whole side of the mountain. And it took all the dirt and trees off of all the mountains surrounding it. Literally, all dirt and all trees were gone.

I had the opportunity, with my family, in 2001 – 21 years after that eruption – to visit. And as you drive up the switchbacks on the mountain, at the bottom the trees are all normal, and the right amount together. But the further you get up the mountain on those switchbacks, the smaller the trees are, and the farther apart, until you get to the top, where there's nothing but rock. Twenty-one years later. But when you look down in the little crevices and cracks, the rain and the snow and the ice has started crumbling the rocks, and there's a little bit of dirt in there. And there are teeny, tiny, little plants starting to grow again. It was a mystical experience for me! Because Mother Nature always comes back! It gave me so much hope to see that!

Imagine how well any plant would grow in the right conditions. Imagine how our consciousness will grow in the right conditions. But the seeds that fall on the rocky ground germinate, and they wither away, because there's nothing for the roots to grow in.

You know how, when you go to a really great workshop, and you hear some fabulous ideas. And you can't wait to get home and try them. And you tell all your friends, *“You've got to go to this workshop! It's amazing!”* And you start trying them, and you do them for a couple of weeks, and then you start to forget to do it, and you go back to your old ways, again?

Why? Why do we do that? Because the old ways and old habits are so deep and so concrete in us that they won't let the new ideas – they're like the rocks. They won't let the new ideas take root in our consciousness.

Roots represent our spiritual foundation. When our spiritual foundation is planted in good soil and nurtured with prayer and meditation, we grow healthy spiritual consciousness. So the text goes on:

*“Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.”*

So the third kind of soil is filled with weeds and thorns. So, in my vegetable garden, I have grass that keeps growing up. Not the kind you smoke, just regular grass, you know. *[Congregation laughs]* I just wanted to be clear! And so I use the hoe, and I chop it. And it comes back. And I've got the stuff – this organic stuff called “Burn Out” – that smells like cinnamon and stuff. And it kills it back for a couple of weeks, and it comes back. And I'm, *“They're not gonna get me! Just not gonna get me!”*

So the seeds that fall with the thorns: they grow up, but the thorns choke them out. So I have to keep after that grass, or it'll choke my plants out. Because the weeds take vital nutrients out of the soil, and

the plants can't grow to their true potential. And if you try to pull up the weeds, it could damage the plants or even kill the roots or pull the plant up with it.

It's like: if our minds are filled with old ideas that no longer serve us, there's no room for new ideas to be planted. Old ideas are like weeds that choke out new ideas. Old ideas are persistent; they can be very difficult to get rid of! I mean, we've had them a long time, right? We've got this deep neural groove in our brain that makes us do the same thing over and over again.

When I was in Hawaii, my office was on the second floor. And the first floor was a nursery/daycare. And you had to go into the daycare and up the steps. And somebody donated money so that you didn't have to go in the gate; we made another set of steps so you could go up to the second floor without going into the daycare. It took us months to learn to use those new steps! We had that neural pathway of going in/up the old steps! And we're supposed to be enlightened beings! *[Rev. Lori and congregation laugh]*

So have you ever try to pull out a root, like a dandelion? We don't have dandelions here, but maybe some of you are from other places. They've got a tap root that goes to China! You know? You pull it out and you get this wimpy little two-inch root, and two weeks later, you've got another dandelion. Well, thistles do the same thing!

When I was in seminary ... I think thistles are beautiful! When I was in seminary, we did our chapel services, and I was doing decorations for one of my friends. And she gave me this great big vase. And it was a hyacinth blue. And she said, *"I don't have money for flowers; could you go out in the woods and just pick some stuff and put in there?"* Because she knew I hiked in the woods all the time at Unity Village.

So I thought, *"Hmmm. This vase is exactly the same color as thistles."* So I got a blanket; I threw it in the back of my car. I got some really sharp scissors. I went all these roads around Unity Village, and I collected this gigantic batch of thistles. I wrapped them up in the blanket; I took them home. I laid them on the floor. I got the vase out; I started cutting them at the right length. I picked one up, and this little spider fell out. I'm like, *"Oh; okay. Here, little spider."* I took him outside. Picked up the second one, and two spiders fell out. Took them outside. The third one had three spiders. And I'm like, *"I've got a problem here."* *[Congregation laughs]* So I took them in the bathtub ... and I'm not going to tell you what happened after that. Except *[laughs]* they were spider-free after that! And when I put them in the vase, there were enough to fill that gigantic vase up. They matched the color perfectly.

I took it into the Fillmore Chapel, and I put it on a little pedestal with a tablecloth on it, all folded perfectly. And when my friend came in, she went, *"<Gasp> Where did you get those flowers? They're beautiful!"* And she walked down the aisle. She got halfway down the aisle and she went, *"Are those thistles?"* *[Rev. Lori and congregation laugh]* But they were beautiful! And they're weeds! So, maybe not all weeds are bad, right? *[Congregation laughs]*

Okay ... Oh, goodness. But so we need to stay firmly rooted in our relationship with God. We have to find ways to eliminate the weeds: those thoughts that don't serve us anymore. Things that distract us from achieving our goals ... you know, that "get-rich-quick" scheme ... that next multi-level marketing program. I bet if I asked you to raise your hand, every single one of you has been in one of those of some kind. Right? I'm not even going to look, because I've been in more than one.

You know, there's lots of "shiny" things out there to distract us every day! The TV, alcohol ... you name it! It's all out there; you know what I mean! But can we start noticing what we're thinking about? Can we stop the negative thinking and start aligning our minds with the mind of God?

So the text goes on:

*“Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain. Some one hundred-fold; some sixty; some thirty. Let anyone with ears, listen.”*

Now, if I just got 30% on my investments, I'd be doing ... fill in the blank, because I'm not going to say it out loud. A hundred-fold, thirty-fold ... that's a really great return on your investment! It's like when we are open and receptive to divine ideas – when we think and speak according to their nature – we reap these fruitful harvests! Planting divine ideas in fertile soil will yield enormous results a hundred-fold what's normally expected. I can use that kind of energy in my life!

That's God's promise! That's God's promise for us to be fruitful and multiply! It's a promise of prosperity ... if we're willing to cultivate our relationship with God.

So the four types of soil represent the four types of consciousness in the people who are listening. Jesus was teaching that our conscious mind – that one we use every day – is superimposed over a deeper, divine mind. We have both. We use it all the time, even when we're not aware of it ... many times unconsciously. If we can recognize Divine Mind, we can allow divine ideas – like the seeds in the parable – to begin to grow in our consciousness.

Isn't it true that everything that we experience in life is colored by our perception of it? So, if you have a negative perception about something, switch it around! You don't need that! When we close our minds and hearts to Truth – that we have the Spirit of God within us – we have ears that do not hear. Then the parable has no meaning for us. But when we're open to the Truth – when we get past the “rules” and the dogma, those manmade rules – we come to the inner kingdom of heaven within: that realm of higher consciousness and oneness.

It's important that we take our spirituality – our divine nature – into our everyday experience, represented by the seed. When we step into the world, we take with us a multitude of crystalized thoughts, attitudes and old beliefs and values. We can choose to see the spiritual in every material experience.

That rocky ground might be our lack of commitment to our own spiritual development that robs us of our true potential. Even our best intentions – represented by those seeds – can be choked out by our lack of understanding or ability to have ears to hear.

All seeds grown in higher consciousness produce good fruit of joy, prosperity, peace, love and abundance. One hundred-fold or more! We create a world that's centered in spiritual consciousness in the realm of God when we pray and when we meditate. And those who are one with their Christ nature already know this is true: the Christ nature is the same as our Divine Mind. How? Because they have ears that hear.

Finally, the key to the understanding of this parable: if there's a basic polarity that exists between two levels of consciousness. There's Divine Mind – universal and unconditional. It's our connection to Spirit, where we access divine ideas. And there's the conscious phase of mind, which is individual, personal and local. We all have it. This is our own unique and individual mind. Together, Divine Mind and our own mind are one in all, and all in one. Spirit is our eternal identity. As individuals, we are capable of relationships with Spirit.

Four types of conditions of soil and rock represent four possible types of human response and understanding to Spirit within. When someone hears the Word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, it cannot root and grow in a heart, like the seed that's sown on the path. The one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy – yet the person has no root or relationship in God – when trouble arises, that relationship with God suffers because it was sown on rocky ground. The one who hears the Word but cares more of the world and the lure of wealth, then their relationship with God is like the seeds that are choked out. But the one who hears the Word and understands their

relationship with God is like the seed sown on good soil, and bears fruit one hundred-fold. Why? Because we are truly living in the kingdom of heaven, where we experience heaven on earth.

Let us pray:

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for these divine words. For your Spirit in us that lifts us up out of old ideas and plants seeds of new, prosperous, loving, joyful, abundant ideas for us to move forward into a world that is created for us and for everyone. We're so grateful for this music and meditation and message. We know it lifts us up out of the old, and we rejoice in our relationship with you, O, God. And so we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

Thank you!

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